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Letter dated 22 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the second meeting, held at Kinshasa, of the Preparatory Committee for the Great Lakes Conference, issued on 19 October 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dirk Jan **van den Berg**
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Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Statement on the second meeting, held at Kinshasa, of the Preparatory Committee for the Great Lakes Conference, issued on 19 October 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

1. The European Union wishes to congratulate you on the results of the first preparatory meeting for the Conference and the thematic meetings. These meetings have reaffirmed that we are in a process that can be instrumental to achieving peace, stability, security and development in the Great Lakes region.

2. This second meeting of the Preparatory Committee is considered a memorable event, not only because the concept of the Conference was based on an analysis of the regional dimension of recent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also because this meeting is the first with representation of the new core members.

3. The European Union looks forward to the active participation in the Conference of the new core members Angola, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo and the Sudan.

4. The European Union would like to express its appreciation to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for hosting the meeting. The active participation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Conference is a sign of commitment to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself and in the region as a whole.

5. The European Union looks forward to fruitful discussions during the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee, this week in Kinshasa. The European Union is present here to once again demonstrate its partnership during the preparations for the Conference.

6. The European Union repeats its view that the Conference comes at a crucial junction in the history of the region, by providing a platform to discuss options and to agree on actions paving the way towards a peaceful and prosperous future for the region.

7. The starting point in this effort is genuine dialogue and agreement on concrete confidence-building measures which can be supported and enhanced by local and international partners such as the European Union. Confidence-building is a process that starts with people. Agents for change can play a major role in such efforts, as has been demonstrated by Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan winner of the 2004 Nobel Prize for peace.

8. The Conference is instrumental in the long-term process towards peace and reconciliation and should not replace or delay the national transitions. Some may be sceptical about the possible outcome, but there is no alternative forum where all regional stakeholders join hands, listen to each other and work towards a settlement

that will respect the other's position. The political significance of this forum in this war-torn region cannot be underestimated.

9. The Conference therefore deserves the full and unequivocal commitment of its participants and of the Governments and peoples they represent. The Group of Friends, of which the European Union is a member, and the international community at large will provide financial, technical and diplomatic support to help make this Conference a success.

10. In view of the rapidly approaching summit of the Heads of State on 19 and 20 November at Dar es Salaam, the European Union would like to emphasize that the outcome of the second preparatory meeting is of the utmost importance. The European Union looks forward to the discussion of a "zero draft" of the declaration of principles, policies, orientations and directives at the summit of Heads of State at Dar es Salaam.

11. The European Union urges all participants to engage in constructive and open-minded dialogue. The European Union reiterates its view that the Conference should focus as much as possible on the key area of concern: peace and security. In this framework, the European Union would definitely welcome a central role for the African Union. Without peace and security, efforts in other areas, such as economic development and regional integration, will be in vain. Participants should build upon existing agreements, arrangements and organizations, such as COMESA, SADC, EAC and CEPGL. In the field of security, the Joint Verification Mechanism as well as the tripartite agreement between Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be used as building blocks for the final security arrangements to be agreed on by the Conference.

12. This is truly a historical episode in the region of the Great Lakes. It provides all of you with a unique opportunity to chart the course towards peace, security and development for millions of people who have known little besides oppression, violence and poverty. The European Union stands by you. Let's take that chance.

The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia,* the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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* Croatia continues to be part of the stabilization and association process.